

" G O S S I P "

Property of Johnnie Speer.

" G O S S I P "

CAST

LEM GARBER Character old man.

RONALD GARBER Juvenile Lead.

HETTY GARBER Character comedy

MRS. JONES Character.

MADGE Lead.

SETTING

The interior of the Garber living room and dining room combined. Table L. from C, Radio on small table up back. Chairs and other home-like conveniences. Neat set.

PROPS

Suit case

Breakfast dishes

Letter

Telegram

Radio

Bottle of pills

Telephone.

"GOSSIP "

(MRS. JONES SETTING THE TABLE FOR SUPPER. MRS. JONES KNOCKS ON D. C. SHE GOES TO DOOR.)

HETTY

(OPENING DOOR) Oh come right on in, Mrs. Jones. How are you?

MRS. JONES

Oh, I'm all right, but I just come over to get some sugar. I can't stay a minute (SITS DOWN) Did you hear the scandal about Mrs. Epsom? Her husband's going to leave her?

HETTY

No? Tell me all about it.

MRS. JONES

Her husband thinks she's messing with the ice-man.

HETTY

Oh, isn't that dreadful. I thought the ice-man was mixed up with Mrs. Lane next door.

MRS. JONES

Oh, I guess he's mixed up with several ladies on his route. They do say he's a handsome devil, but of course I don't know anything about him.

HETTY

Neither do I. We have a frigidaire. ~~Oh I think it's a wonderful invention.~~

MRS. JONES

So have we. Oh I tell you the frigidaire is a wonderful invention.

HETTY

Yes, I've noticed that since the frigidaire, children don't look so much like the ice-man any more.

MRS. JONES

Oh by the way, Mrs. Garber, have you heard from your son lately?

HETTY

No not recently. Ronald is supposed to be coming home some time next week.

MRS. JONES

My! My! Don't you worry sometimes with your boy away in the big city. It's so easy for young men to go astray now adays, and with so many wild women running around--

HETTY

Oh, I'm not afraid my boy wouldn't have anything to do with wild women. He went away to the city to study mechanical engineering, and he's going to work in Hick's Machine shop just as soon as he gets home.

MRS. JONES

Well, let's hope the city hasn't worked it's wiles with him. But

I must really be going. I came over to borrow a cup of sugar.

HETTY

Yes, I'll get it for you and then I must be getting supper. Lem will be coming home pretty soon now. (LOOKS OUT WINDOW) Oh gracious here he comes now, and I haven't even got the potatoes cooked.

MRS. JONES

Oh my land and my husband will be home too. I must hurry.

HETTY

Wait and I'll get the sugar for you---(STARTS)

LEM

(ENTERS NEWSPAPER AND TAKES OFF HAT) Hello, supper ready, ma?

HETTY

Almost not yet. Mrs. Jones just came over to borrow some sugar.

MRS. JONES

Yes, and I must be going right away.

HETTY

(TAKES SUGAR FROM SUGAR BOWL) Here's your sugar. (SHE STARTS) Oh say did you hear the scandal about Lizzie Snodgrass---I must tell you--

LEM

Say, Ma, hurry up with supper. I'm hungry.

HETTY

I will, but let me tell Mrs. Jones about Lizzie Snodgrass.

MRS. JONES

Yes, I must hear it. What do they say?

HETTY

Well, they do say as how she's running around with a traveling man.

MRS. JONES

Oh ain't it awful.

HETTY

Mrs. Snoopingadget saw them sitting in a motor car on a country road and he had his arms around her.

MRS. JONES

Oh the poor girls gone to ruin!

LEM

Well, let her be ruined but get me something to eat.

MRS. JONES

Well, I must be going--(STARTS)

HETTY

Oh, and did I tell you that somebody caught the person kissing one of the choir girls behind organ last Sunday.

LEM

That's a hell of a place to kiss a girl. Why didn't he kiss her in front of the organ.

HETTY

Lem Garber, it's no joke. I must tell you all about it, Mrs. Jones-- Mrs. Muffet says as how she heard Mrs. Rivers tell Mrs. Brown as how Mr. Peters was---

LEM

Oh Lord! Ma, will you dry up and get me something to eat.

HETTY

(PAYING NO ATTENTION) going around with another woman, and they're going to get a divorce. Isn't that terrible.

MRS. JONES

Awful! But I must be going--

~~HETTY~~ LEM

Yes hurry up.

HETTY

And did you hear about Mrs. Chiseldick? Oh it's terrible. What do you think? She had a calf---I mean her cow did, and somebody stole it last night and--

LEM

Ma, for cryin' out loud, will you two women ever get through gabbing? Gol darn it it's enough to drive a man to drink---

~~HETTY~~ MRS. JONES

Well, I must go. (STARTS)

HETTY

And speaking about drinking--did you know that some body saw Deacon Pettibone drunk last night?

MRS. JONES

Oh isn't that terrible? He's a regular old toper so they say.

HETTY

Oh liquor is a terrible thing. I'm certainly glad my husband doesn't drink.

LEM

I wish to Heck I had a quart! Listen, Mrs. Jones, will you please go home before that phonograph of mine starts telling you some more gossip?

MRS. JONES

Yes inddeed, Mr. Graber I am going home right now. (STARTS VOICE OFF STAGE YELLS "TELEGRAM") Oh my goodness you've got a telegram.

HETTY

A telgram. Oh somebody's dead. Somebody's dead. I just know it. (GOES TO DOOR GETS TELEGRAM) Oh now I'm all unstrung. Somebody's dead. Somebody's dead. (WALKS UP AND DOWN) Oh I'm going to faint. I'm going to faint.

LEM

Oh, you darn fool, open it and find out. Maybe it's from our boy. He might be comin' home sooner'n we expect.

HETTY

Oh somebodys dead somebodys dead and I haven'

t got a thing to wear

to the funeral!

LEM

Give me that telegram. I'll read it. (OPENS IT) Well, holy sodes our boy's got married AND HE's coming home on the sixthirty train with his wife. He says she's an actress.

HETTY

An actress? Myson married to a show woman. Oh perdition! We're disgraced.

MRS. JONES

Oh I just knew that boy would get in trouble going to the city.

HETTY

Oh we musn't let the neighbors know. I know what them show women are. He'll bring some wild hussy home that smokes and wears flimsy clothing. She'll corrupt the whole house-hold.

LEM

Aw, now, ma, it might not be as bad as that. I wonder if she's a good looker?

HETTY

You old devil. I'm going to lick you in the closet. You'll not even get a peek at her. That's what you'd like to hage is some good looking woman in the house with you.

LEM

(CHUCKLES) Well, it'd be a change. There aint been a good looking woman in this house in thirty years.

MRS. JONES

Why how dare you, Mr. Garber? I've been over to your house almost ever day.

LEM

Well, you don't call yourself good lookin' do you? That face of yours would stop an eight day clock.

MRS. JONES

Oh, I'm insulted. I shall leave here at once. (STARTS. LOOKS OFF) OH here comes your son, and the woman is with him. Oh I mustn't look at her. I'd be contaminated. I just know she's a wild woman.

HETTY

Oh, Mrs. Jones, please don't tell anyone about my son marryin' an actress. I don't want them to know. until I've civilized her.

MRS. JONES

Oh I won't tell a soul. You know me. Nar a soul will I tell; I must go right over to Mrs. Browns house. Good bye. (EXITS)

LEM

No, she won't tell a soul. By the time she gets through the whole town will know about it.

HETTY

Oh, Lem, what are we going to do? I just know I'm not going to like her. She's just taken advantage of my boy and married him to lead him astray.

LEM

Now nothin' of the kind. Give the girl a chance.

RONALD

(ENTERS C. WITH MADGE) Come on in, Honey, and meet the greatest folks in the world. Mother, meet the bride?

HETTY

(DRYING HER EYES) How--how do you do.

MADGE

(GOING TO HER AND PUTTING HER ARMS AROUND HER) So you are Ronald's mother. Oh I'm so glad to meet you. And this is your father---how are you, Pop? (MUSSES HIS HAIR UP. HE LAUGHS EMBARRASSED. HETTY GIVES HIM A DIRTY LOOK)

HETTY

Lem control yourself!

RONALD

Well, aren't you folks going to congratulate us on our marriage?

LEM

Yes, I congratulate you, my boy, and I think you picked a winner.

RONALD

What do you think, Mother?

MADGE

Your mother does not like me, Ronald. I can tell it by the way she is looking at me. But don't worry I'm going to make you like me.

HETTY

Now, my dear, you know this is somewhat of a shock to me. I am a good Christian woman, and we have never had an actress in all of our family. I will be frank with you I can't see what you could see in marrying my boy. He is not wealthy and he is a quiet hard working man. I'm sure you will find life here very dull in contrast to your wild life on the stage.

MADGE

Well, now I'll tell you why I married your boy. In the first place I love him and I'm sure he loves me. I wanted a home and a relief from the wild life of the stage. I knew that you would not understand nor like me from the start, but I shall be frank with you. I only have three habits and they are not so bad. I smoke cigarettes I drink occasionally, and I swear when I get mad.

LEM

She's a woman after my own heart by gosh!

~~MADGE~~ HETTY

Oh mercy! Mercy! You actually smoke cigarettes?

MADGE

I do! (PUTS CIGARETTE IN HER MOUTH LIGHTS IT)

HETTY

And you drink?

MADGE

I'll not lie to you when I feel like it I do.

LEM

Why of course. A good drink never hurt nobody.

HETTY

Oh I think I'm going to faint? And do you mean to tell me when you get mad you actually swear?

MADGE

I swear like hell!

HETTY

Oh that's the end. That's the end. (SITS DOWN THEN STANDS UP) I'm going to faint. I'm going to faint. (FALLS BACK IN FAINT)

MADGE

(ALARMED) Oh she's fainted!

LEM

Don't worry, my girl. It's nothing serious. She's been doing this for thirty years. When she's standing up, she sits down and faints, and when she's sitting down, she stands up!

***** NUMBER ONE *****
* *****

MADGE

(ENTERS AND IS FIXING CURTAINS ON WINDOW AND TIDYING UP THE HOUSE)
(THEN BEGINS FIXING THE DISHES ON THE TABLE WHILE SINGING I'M COOKING
BREAKFAST FOR THE ONE I LOVE)

LEM

(ENTERS READY FOR WORK) Well, well, if here isn't my little daughter-in-law, and on the job so bright and early in the morning. Madge, since you've been here it seems like this house has brightened up and changed altogether.

MADGE

Oh I like to fixe up the rooms. Do you know I never had a real home to live in all my life. I was practically born backstage of a theatre and being knocked about from one stage door to a boarding house room sure makes one appreciate a real home when they get it.

LEM

(PUTS HIS ARMS AROUND HER) You're a great kid, Madge. I'm mighty glad my son picked a girl like you.

MADGE

(SMILES) Yes, you liked me from the start, but I've still got to win your wife over to my side.

LEM

Oh don't pay any attention to that old battle-ax. (HETTY ENTERS UNSEEN WITH DISH IN HAND) She's kinda cracked in the upper story. You're all O. K. with me and-- (HETTY COUGHS REAL LOUD. GIVES THEM DIRTY LOOK. LEM SITS DOWN REAL QUICK) Yes sir, that's what I was tell in this fella, I sez sez I "You're all O. K. with me--" Oh hello Ma. Nice morning aint it?

HETTY

(SITS PLATE DOWN ON TABLE) Is it? I had noticed it.

(ENTERS) Well, breakfast already. You must have gotten up away before I did, Madge. (KISSES HER)

MADGE

Yes, darling, I've been up hours ago. (THEY ALL SIT DOWN) Your mother and I cooked the breakfast.

LEM

(EATING PANCAKES) Hmmm! Good pancakes.

MADGE

Thank you. I made them.

LEM

Best I've had in thirty years. Pass some more of 'em, Ma.

HETTY

(SHOVES PANCAKES AT HIM) Oh yes!

RONALD

This is a real breakfast.

LEM

(DRINKS COFFEE SPLUTTERS AND SPITS IT OUT) Whew! Who made this coffee?

HETTY

I did.

LEM

It tastes like it. Ma, you aint as good a cook as Madge is.

HETTY

Oh no---well, that's just too bad.

MADGE

Now, Mr. Garber you shouldn't say that. Your wife is a wonderful cook.

~~HETTY~~

LEM

Rats! The only thing Ma can do is talk. Between her and old lady Jones---(KNOCK ON DOOR AND MRS. JONES COMES IN) Oh speak of the devil!

MRS. JONES

Oh good morning, I just came over to borrow some sugar and tell you what I heard Mrs. Buzzby say.

LEM

Oh there starts the scandal again. Well, I'm going to work. (GETS UP)

RONALD

I've got to go too. Well, good bye--sweetheart. (KISSES MADGE. THEY EXIT (

MADGE

Good bye, Ronald! (THROWS KISS AT HIM)

MRS. JONES

My goodness I hope they didn't hurry off on my account.

On no. Sit right down, Mrs. Jones, and tell me what you heard.

MRS. JONES

(SITS DOWN. LOOKS AT MADGE WHO IS STILL THROWING KISSES TO RONALD)
My my goodness, look at her. She's still throwing kisses at her husband.

HETTY

Yes, and in two more week s she'll be throwing dishes at him.

MADGE

Oh no I won't. I love him. (RONALD ENTERS AGAIN) Did you forget something?

RONALD

Yes I forgot to kiss you on the neck? (KISSES HER ON THE NECK) Good bye? (EXITS)

MADGE

(WAVING) Good bye. Good bye.

~~HETTY~~ MRS. JONES

Now isn't that silly.

~~MRS. JONES~~ HETTY

I wish they wouldn't do that. It gets me all worked up and pa can't do me any good.

RONALD

(ENTERS AGAIN) I forgot to kiss you on the hands darling. (KISSES HER HANDS EXITS) Good bye.

MRS. JONES

Oh I never saw the like.

RONALD

(ENTERS AGAIN) I forgot to kiss you on the back. (KISSES HER ON THE MIDDLE OF THE BACK)(EXITS) Good bye. Good bye.

HETTY

I hope he doesn't come back any more. There's just one more place he can kiss her.

MRS. JONES

Do you know I believe your son really loves his wife.

MADGE

Of course he loves me. And I love him. Well, my dear mother-in-law I guess I clear away the dishes.(TAKES SOME DISHES AND EXITS R.)

MRS. JONES

Well, she seems like a hard working girl for a woman of the stage.

HETTY

Oh yes. She helps me with ~~the~~ all the house work and the cooking, but I don't think it will last long. I

MADGE

(ENTERS TAKES AWAY SOME MORE DISHES) Oh yes it will. (EXITS.)

Oh she heard what you said.
her?

MRS. JONES 9
Tell me, Mrs. Barber, how do you like

HETTY
Oh I guess she's all right. But then I could never approve of a woman of the stage. Sooner or later she'll want to return to the wild life she led before. And what do you think I was looking through her trunk the other day and I saw the costumes she wore on the stage -

MRS. JONES
Oh my goodness what did she wear?(MOVES OVER CLOSER TO HER)

HETTY
Nothing but a mosquito bar and some netting. Oh I was never so shocked in my life. And you should have seen the pictures she had-- showing her posed almost naked.

MRS. JONES
Oh for shame. for shame. I'll bet she's a brazen hussy, You want to watch your husband around her.

HETTY
Don't worry I am. I'm going to the hardware store tomorrow and get a padlock so I can lock him in bed at night.

MRS. JONES
I wouldn't trust my husband to even look at her.

HETTY
Oh I was never so ashamed and disgraced in my life. I know all the neighbors are talking about her.

MRS. JONES
Well, of course everybody knows what she is. They don't give them two months of matrimonial happiness.

HETTY
I can't understand whatever possessed my boy to marry a woman like her. The idea of a woman going out before the public and displaying herself like she does in those pictures. But come and tell me what you heard about Mrs. Buzby--

MRS. JONES
Well, I don't want you to repeat it for the world-- don't tell a soul.

HETTY
Oh I won't tell a soul and if I do tell it I'll tell them not to tell that I told it.

MRS. JONES
Well, Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Brown caught their husbands --(WHISPERS IN HER EAR)

HETTY
Oh the dirty things!

MADGE
(ENTERS IN VERY BRIEF COSTUME) Are you talking about me?

HETTY
Madge, what do you mean by wearing that costume?

MRS. JONES

Oh I'm shocked!

MADGE

Why is there anything so terrible about my little dancing costume?

HETTY

It's disgraceful. The very idea of showing your legs?

JHEM MADGE

What's the matter with ~~that~~?

HETTY

Do you think I'd showmy legs in that manner?

MADGE

Well, are you ashamed of them?

HETTY

What are you wearing that for?

MADGE

I'm going to take my morning limbering up excercises. I always do that so I won't get old and ugly like you two.

MRS. JONES

Well, of all the nerve.

MADGE

Oh yes, Mrs. Jones, I'm quite differnt from you two. What ever I have to say I'll say it to your face. If you two women would take excercises like this you would never get old and lame. (KICKS HIGH IN THE AIR)

HETTY

Now wouldn't I look fine doing something like that.

MADGE

I don't think you could do it in the first place. Here's another good one. (DOES A SPLIT OR SOME OTHER STEP) This is how I expect to hold my husband's love always.

HETTY

What do you mean?

MADGE

I mean by always keeping myself young and lively. Didn't you two women notice how Ronald kissed me this morning when he left for work? Your husband never done that.

HETTY

I wouldn't want the old billy goat to kiss me.

MADGE

Oh yes you would, but youdon't want to admit it. You two women have critized me because I' am an actress, and not a home woman like you are. But I want you to know that I intend to make a good home for my husband, and even though I have been a wild brazen hussy like you say, I want you to know that I can have good clean thoughts and an earnest desire to settle down. I've watched you, Mrs. Garber, trying to learn the good things that a wife should know, but I

I think you are the one that needs the lecture.

HETTY

Do you mean to say that I don't know how to keep a good house.

MADGE

No, I mean to say that you don't know how to hold your husband. There is a lot of duties a wife has besides just keeping house. You've got to find out the little things that your husband appreciates/

HETTY

Hump! I'm sure I've always given Lem what he wanted.

MADGE

No you haven't. I've watched you. You don't give him the loving little attentions that any man likes. When your husband comes home from work, you usually greet him with a scowl or a scolding, or you and Mrs. Jones are busy talking scandal and don't even notice him at all.

HETTY

Well, what do you think I should do?

MADGE

When your husband comes home you should greet him with a kiss, throw your arms around his neck, flatter him, and hug him and---

HETTY

Hump! If I'd ever do that to pa, right away he'd start yawning, and think it was time to go to bed! I don't want to hear any more such foolishness, and Madge, if you want to wgo around the house in that terrible outfit, you go in your own room and pull down the curtains. I don't want the neighbors to see.

MRS. JONES

I should say so. Well, Mrs. Garber, I think I shall go.

MADGE

Oh please don't let me run you off Mrs. Jones.

MRS. JONES

Young lady, I refuse to stay in the same room where you are. You are shameless wanton creature, and when you die the devil will claim your soul.

MADGE

Well, don't worry, Mrs. Jones, you'll never go to the hot-place.

MRS. JONES

Indeed and why not?

MADGE

Because you would talk the poor devil down and out! (EXITS R.)

MRS. JONES

OH! The hussy! (TURNS UP NOSE AND EXITS)

HETTY

Oh that daughter-in-law will be the death of me yet. The idea telling me how to hold my husband. (THINKS A MINUTE) Hmmm.' I've noticed Lem seems to give her a lot of attention. I wonder---I wonder if I

am losing his love. Well, if I am I don't think I'm going to 12
run around underdressed like she does. Take limbering up exercises
every morning? Let's see now what was that stunt she does. (DOES A
LITTLE KICK) How did she get in to shape to do that? (DOES A HIGH
KICK AND GETS A HITCH IN HER BACK) Oh! Oh! I'm ruined. Where's
the Sloan's Liniment! (MOBBLES OFF HOLDING HER BACK)

***** NUMBER TWO *****

HETTY

(ENTERS. CARRYING A LETTER AND WALKING UP AND DOWN) Oh dear. This
is the end. This is the end. Oh I knew it about her. I knew it.
(GOES TO TELEPHONE) Main 654. Hello. Is that you Mrs. Jones
Come over I've got something to tell you. Oh it's terrible. Hurry
right over. All right. (HANGS UP) Oh I don't know what I'm going to
do. (WALKS UP AND DOWN RAVING)

MRS. JONES

(ENTERS.) What is? I came over right away?

HETTY

Oh, Mrs. Jones, you were right about that wife of my son's. She's
worse than we ever thought.

MRS. JONES

Oh, what has she done.

HETTY

Well, sit down. For one thing, I think she's trying to make love to
my husband.

MRS. JONES

Oh terrible. Terrible. Have you caught them at it?

HETTY

No, no exactly. But for the last few nights Lem has been slipping
out and saying he was going to the lodge, and at the same time, she's
been going some where. I think they go out in the country or some
where and meet each other.

MRS. JONES

Oh you poor woman.

HETTY

Oh don't pity me, Pity that Tennessee weed monkey I'm married too.
I'm going to pulverize him! And then besides playing around with
my husband she's messed up with another man.

MRS. JONES

Oh do tell.

HETTY

Yes I do tell. Oh, I've found the proof of it, but I haven't said
a word yet. I wasn't going to tell a human being, that's why I called
you over. I had to tell some one.

MRS. JONES

Well, if you really think she's untrue to your son, the best thing
to do is to tell him!

Oh it would just break Ronnie's heart. (BEGINS TO CRY) I never trusted Madge from the day he brought her home. And then this morning when I found this letter in her room. Well, it just simply made me sick. I couldn't talk--for at least two seconds. There was her name at the top of the letter. Dear Madge--Oh!

MRS. JONES

What does the letter say?

HETTY

I'll read it to you, but don't breathe this to any one, not even your own family. (TAKES LETTER AND READS) "Dear Madge; you are still the sweetest woman in the world to me. I love you more every day. No matter if that big sap does love you, you don't belong to me. Can you imagine it calling my son a big sap. And then listen to this--" "You've got to keep your promise. You're mine and you're going away with me. I--"

MRS. JONES

Go on read the rest of it. Ain't it awful? Tttt!

HETTY

That's all there is to the page. She must have either hid the rest of the letter or I didn't find it. I suppose she's plannin' on runnin' away with the man, whoever he is, and leavin' my boy. Oh it'll just kill him. I don't know whether to say anything to her or not.

MRS. JONES

Like a s not the terrible creature would lie out of it or swear at you. Oh she's a vampire that's wha t she is. But I'd sure tell your son.

HETTY

Oh, I'm afraid too. Ronald has a terrible temper, and he might want to kill Madge. Now, Mrs. Jone, please don't tell about this to any one. Oh I'm so worried. Here I am with a vampire in my midst vamping my husband and trifling on my son. Do you know I really believe I'm losing Lem's love?

MRS. JONES

Oh men are such a fickle lot. My husband's just like yours. He's always got some excuse to go out at night

HETTY

Do you know I was just wondering if there was anytjing to what Madge said about taking excercises to keep young, andand all that.

MRS. JONES

Do you mean you and I ought to run around kicking in the air with no cloehtes on.

HETTY

Well, if I thought it would win Lem's love back---

MRS. JONES

Oh but I'd feel so silly doing anything like that.

HETTY

Well, there might be something to what she says. I thought maybe if you'd do it with me, I'd try it. And when Lem comes home to night I'm going to throw my arms around him and kiss him. Are you game enough to

Try it? What do you say we try taking some excercises this 14
a fternoon. Nobody is in the house. Madge has gone up town, and
we could do it and not be seen.

HETTYJD MRS. JONES

But what will we wear ?

HETTY

Well, let's take off our dresses and I'll turn on the radio and we'll
do it to music. Come on. (TAKES OFF HER DRESS)

MRS. JONES

Oh I don't know whether we ought to do this or not. (TAKES OFF DRESS
BOTH ARE IN COMEDY UNDERWEAR OR LONG DRAWERS)

HETTY

Oh I feel so silly!

MRS. JONES

Oh I wouldn't have anybody catch us for the world.

HETTY

Oh I'd just die. Now I'll turn on the radio and we'll see if we
can't get some excercises. (TURNS RADIO ON) Listen.

RADIO

This Station K U K U broadcasting Dr. Walter Van Camps Daily Excercises
for keeping young and trim and beautiful. Ready, Radio Audience.

HETTY

Now get ready to do what the radio says.

RADIO

(MUSIC PLAYS SOFT) Stand on flat feet, heels together.

MRS. JONES

I can't do it. I'm knockneed.

RADIO

Raise the left leg and the rig t leg alternating. One two. One two
One two. (THEY KICK THEIR LEGS.) Now bend over and touch the toes.
Now bend back. Back back.

HETTY

(COMEDY BUS.) How much farther is this going?

RADIO

Now spread your legs apart.

HETTY

That sounds like Lem tal king.

RADIO

Now run around the room jumping up and down. (THEY RUN AROUND THE
ROOM)

~~HETTY~~ MRS. JONES.

I feel like a grasshopper

HETTY

You look like a buzzard.

Always talking. Why I'm the most tight mouthed person in the world.

MADGE

Oh, but won't you promise to keep it a secret about what the doctor said. I'm Ronnie's wife, and I ought to have the pleasure of breaking the news to him. You will keep quiet, won't you? Please promise me you will. (PUTS HER ARMS AROUND HETTY'S NECK AND CRIES) Oh I'm so upset I---

HETTY

(TAKING HER AT ARMS LENGTH) What's the matter, Madge? Don't you love my boy any more?

MADGE

Yes I do. I'll always love him. But for the past week Ronnie has acted so strangely. Oh, I don't know what's the matter with him. He seems so cold--and he looks at me so strangely as if I were guilty of something or as if he were tired of me. That's why I don't want you tell him about the baby, because if he no longer loves me I don't want to have it. I'll go away. I'll--oh promise me give me your word of honor that you won't tell Ronald about the baby.

HETTY

Well, all right. I won't say anything about it. I'll let you tell him.

MADGE

You swear you'll keep it a secret?

HETTY

Yes I can keep my mouth shut if I want to. (LOOKS OUT WINDOW) Oh look there's Ronald coming home now. Why he's early. And Lem's is right behind him. I wonder what could have happened.

RONALD

(ENTERS VERY ANGRY. GOES RIGHT TO MADGE) Looky here, Madge, I want you to get your duds packed and get out. Go to your lover, whoever he is. Oh don't look at me as if you didn't know what I'm talking about.

MADGE

(BACKING AWAY FROM HIM FRIGHTENED) Ronnie! (LEM ENTERS)

RONALD

You know what I mean. A week ago Bill Jones told me I ought to keep an eye open to what you were doing. That's all he said. I thought maybe he was only trying to start trouble, and so I said nothing. Then today I happened to pass a bunch of the guys in the grease pit at the garage. They were laughing and wondering when you were going to pull out and leave me for the guy who wrote you letters every day God! What a joke I must be. The whole town knows about the love affairs of my wife, while I go on workin' and thinkin' she's an angel.

HETTY

(TREMBLING NERVOUSLY) Now, Ronnie, I--try and control yourself. (TAKES LETTER FROM DRESS) I don't know how that talk got started, but I--I found this letter in Madge's room. Of course I couldn't help but see ikk what it said--

Now stand upon a chair.

HETTY

Oh here goes my rehematism. (THEY GET UP ON CHAIR. HETTY'S BACK IS FACING C. DOOR)

RADIO

Now bend way over---way over way over. (THEY BEND OVER JUST AS LEM ENTERS AND SEES)

LEM

My Lord the moon is out. (MRS. JONES SCREAMS AND GRABS HER DRESS AND EXITS) What's the matter with you, Ma, have you gone goofy?

HETTY

Oh, sweetheart, (GIGGLES) I'm so glad you are home. (KISSES HIM) Oh you big wonderful man. (PUTS ARMS AROUND HIM EMBRACES HIM) Oh I love you.

LEM

(STARTLED) Ma. (FEELS HER HEAD. FEELS HER PULSE)

HETTY

Why what's the matter, honey?

LEM

Now stay right there, honey, don't get excited. Stay right there. (EXITS REAL QUICK AND BRINGS ON A BOTTLE) Here take this.

HETTY

Why what is it?

LEM

It's aphysic. You sick and you need it.

***** NUMBER THREE *****

MADGE

(ENTERS. HAT AND COAT ON. TAKES THEM OFF. LOOKS NERVOUS)

HETTY

(ENTERS) What's the matter, Madge you look so nervous. Don't you feel well?

MADGE

Oh I'm all right. I--

HETTY

No you're not there's something the matter with you. What is it?

MADGE

Well, I--I've been to the doctor this afternoon and he told me that I was going to have a baby.

HETTY

A baby! Well what in the world are you worried over? Lawsakes! You ought to be tickled pink. Wait till I tell Ronald.

MADGE

Oh no--no you mustn't tell him. I want to do that. Oh I wish I hadn't told you. You're always talking.

MADGE
Oh, so you're the cause of all this talk. (SNATCHES LETTER FROM HER)
I might have known.

RONALD
(SNATCHES HER ROUGHLY) Give me that letter. (SHAKES HER)

MADGE
Ronnie. Please!

RONALD
Give me that letter. (GRABS IT AND READS) Dear Madge. You are still the sweetest woman in the world. I love you more every day. Now matter if that big sap does love you don't belong to him. You're mine and you're going away with me---Oh you--(CRUMBLES THE LETTER AND THROWS IT ON THE FLOOR)

LEM
Now, Ronald, don't do nothin' rash. Maybe this can be explained.

RONALD
(TURNING ON HIM) Oh you should stand up for her. Aside from betrayin me for another man, she has even worked her ways with you. Do you know what they're telling all over town? I'll tell you. They that my wife is also my father's mistress.

LEM
What!

HETTY
Oh I wouldn't be surprised at what they say. Lem you and Madge have been going some where for the last two or three evenings and--

LEM
Why we've--

RONALD
Oh don't try to lie out of it. I forgive you because you're an old fool, but her---Damn you get out. (SLAPS HER AND PUSHES HER TOWARDS THE DOOR) You trifling no good---Get out. Go to your lover. Get out before I---

MADGE
(STANDING PERFECTLY STILL) All right, Ronald, I'm going. (FACES HIM) But before I go, I'm going to make you regret that slap. You'll always be sorry for it. That letter you just read was not from some lover. It was in your own handwriting. You wrote it to me before we were married. It was when you wanted me to stop going with that shoe clerk. And had your meddlesome mother taken the trouble to dig further into my trunk she would have found the rest of the letter with your name signed to it.

RONALD
Madge!

MADGE
Now you can all kiss my royal---goatee. (EXITING SEEMINGLY IN DOOR) OPENS DOOR AND MRS. JONES WHO HAS BEEN PEEPING IN KEY HOLE FALLS FLAT ON HER FACE)

MRS. JONES
Oh for pity's sakes.

Well, what are you doing here, you key-hole peeper.

MRS. JONES

Oh, I--I just heard loud voices and I came over to see if anything was the matter.

RONALD

No, nothings the matter you gossiping old busy body. I've just lost my wife that's all.

LEM

Yes, you old Nespapre run and tell the town about it, just like you have everything else. Ronald you see this is all your durned fool mother's fault---the idea of you accusing your darling wife of what you did---me her---why I ought to kick your brains out you young fool. And you, old woman, I got a good notion to warm you with a my razor strap.

HETTY

Oh Lem, you know you've been going out the same time Madge has the last two nights, and I---somebody saw you downtown--and you never told me what you were doing--

LEM

No, you old buzzard, I didn't want to tell you because we were going out and looking in the store windows. Ronald's birthday is next week and Madge wanted me to go with her to pick out something nice for him. It was to be a surprise.

HETTY

Oh.

LEM

Oh! Oh if there wasn't a law against killin' I'd like to---old woman I'd like to cramp about ten inches of that down your throat.

RONALD

Now you see mother what you've done. This is all your fault. You and that gabbing mouth of yours telling everybody in town about this letter.

HETTY

(IN TEARS) Oh I only told Mrs. Jones.

MRS. JONES

And I only told my family about it.

~~RONALD~~ LEM

And they only told the whole damn town about it.

RONALD

Oh to think I talked to my darling wife like that. God, I--I'll never forgive myself and now she's going to leave me. She'll never forgive me.

LEM

Of course not. She shouldn't forgive you, and now I'm going to leave I'm through.

HETTY

Lem, you aint going to leave.

LEM

Yes, I am. I'm tired of listening to your god durned cracked up voice. I'm leaving.

HETTY

Oh you can't leave Lem (HANGING ON TO HIM) ~~Whackwhackwhack~~ If you leave me what will I do.

LEM

You can go to hell. (EXITS)

RONALD

Oh what I fool what a fool I was. (MADGE ENTERS. HE GOES TO HER) Madge Madge please don't go. Darling, you can beat me kick me or antying but don't leave me. I've just found out. It was all mothers fault. Please won't you---Oh Honey. (BURIES FACE IN HER ARMS)

MADGE

(RELENTING) Yes, Ronald I'll forgive you. It was all your mother's incessant talk. I'll stay but she's got to promise to curb hertongue.

RONALD

You bet your life she has. Mother, you've got to stop talking. You and your talk nearly sepearted me and Madge forever, and you made me doinsomething that I'll regret to the end of my days. Now do you hear me. You got to stop talking.

HETTY

(CRYING) Yes, I hear you. I'm sorry. I never meant to get anybody in trouble. I was just talking--I---Oh--(LEM ENTERS WITH SUIT CASE) Oh, Lem, you aint really leaving me. You aren't all packed.

LEM

Yes, I am. I got my one pair of socks and a necktie. I'm already to go.

HETTY

Oh, Lem, please don't leaveme. Please. Lem, honey, I'll promise never to talk again as long as I live if you won't go.

LEM

You promise?

HETTY

Yes I'll never talk again.

LEM

Well, all right, I'll stay, but if you start talking again I'm leavin for good. You old son of a gun you've talked all of your life and now it's tme you called a holiday and give your jaws a rest.

HETTY

I promise. If you won't leave me, I'll even sew my mouth up. I'll sew it up.

LEM

Well, a few stitches in it wouldn't hurt it a durn bit. Now remember old woman, if you and this old snoopy nosed hen start talking again I'm through² Now do you hear me.

HETTY

(WHIMPERING) Yes. I hear you. Oh you never talked this way to me before. I can keep ~~mykkkkkk~~ just as silent as any one can. Believe me I know how to keep a secret and--(BEGINS DRYING HER EYES) Now, Ronald, I want you and Madge to forgive me and you two kiss and make up. I'll never talk again! And Mrs. Jones, what do you think the doctor told Madge today? Shhh! She's going to have a ---baby!

ALL

Oh Good night! (SHE CATCHES HERSELF AND ALL LOOK AT HER WITH DISGUST)

F I N A L E